



Speak Out Now

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Texas Tragedy: A Glimpse of What's to Come

Last week, torrential rainfall ripped through Kerr County, Texas, causing catastrophic flooding. More than a summer's worth of rain fell on the region in a few hours, raising the water level of the Guadalupe River from 3 feet to 30 feet in just 45 minutes during the middle of the night.

People were not adequately warned about the storm and weren't evacuated in time. The flooding has killed at least 129 people, including many young girls from a camp near the river. Many more would have died if it weren't for heroic rescue efforts. Despite this, at least 150 people are still missing from the flooding and are likely dead. And now, emergency crews searching for missing people had to stop due to new floods in the region.

This tragic loss of life was not the result of a random act of nature, but an act of violence — the violence of a system that prioritizes lives over profit, and the violence of politicians that have done everything in their power to cut the very programs that can help prevent and respond to tragedies like this one.

On his first day in office, Trump issued an executive order revoking a set of federal flood protections known as the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. The protections were designed to improve the infrastructure of areas with high risk for extreme weather events. Prior to being revoked, the standard made it so the construction or rebuilding of critical infrastructure such as schools and highways after natural disasters could only receive federal funding if it was built with enhanced flood protections. Trump revoked the standards that were meant to protect against disasters exactly like this one.

These cuts were on top of years of denied requests by local agencies to install a better flood warning system. Since 2017, various local agencies had made repeated requests to the state government to install a flood warning system, but state officials never used the funds available for this to do so. This was a disaster that many officials knew was coming.

The Trump administration also cut important emergency response programs designed to notify communities ahead of dangerous weather events, and to coordinate the rescue response in the aftermath. Early in this administration, Trump and Elon Musk's DOGE gutted staffing levels of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS), laying off thousands of employees

or forcing them to quit. These agencies have staff across the country that issue flood warnings and communicate with local officials to coordinate a response and necessary evacuations. Many important positions at these agencies responsible for the area where this flood happened have been vacant because of Trump's cuts.

Also, to cut costs, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem, whose department oversees the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), issued a new rule this year requiring all contracts and grants costing over \$100,000 to be personally approved by her. This caused huge delays, and Noem failed to respond to such requests during the flooding, taking four days to approve spending that could have saved lives.

This tragedy happened the same day that Congress passed the latest budget by the Trump administration, which imposes greater misery on the population, and only guarantees that more tragedies like this one will keep happening. It is a devastating bill that rams through enormous cuts to vital social services, especially for poor and working-class people, while offering tax cuts for the super-rich and dumping huge sums of money into the military and to massively expand ICE's terrorism on immigrant communities.

Unfortunately, this horrible tragedy in Texas gives a glimpse of what's to come. We live in a system that has no regard for human life. And this administration is doing everything in its power to remove whatever small protections and government support won over the years that remain. Corporations are being handed even more freedom to destroy the planet for profit, while programs to prepare for emergencies like these are being destroyed, leaving us to fend for ourselves. Medicaid, food stamps and many other programs are being gutted, leaving millions without healthcare or access to food or essential services. All the while, ICE and the Department of Homeland Security are being expanded to further terrorize immigrants and suppress all forms of dissent.

This is a clear example of the kind of future this system has in store for us. Those who run this system are prepared to throw our lives into chaos and misery to enrich themselves and reinforce their power. This is a future we cannot accept. If we want to see a different future, if we want to stop these attacks, it depends on us.

The Overdose Epidemic Must End

At least 25 people were hospitalized in a mass overdose incident in the Penn North neighborhood on July 10, caused by a bad batch distributed in the area. The ongoing opioid crisis in Baltimore has killed nearly 6,000 people in the past six years, by far the highest rate of any city in the country.

The mass overdose came the day after a public hearing at City Hall meant to address the crisis. At the meeting, activists and experts demanded that the city adopt lifesaving measures like opening safe consumption sites and decriminalizing drug paraphernalia.

Overdose deaths spiked in recent years after major drug companies made huge profits by shipping enormous quantities of opioids into Baltimore and elsewhere. Our city, already plagued by poverty and racist oppression, was ripe to fall victim to these “deaths of despair.” While corporations profit and politicians criminalize addiction, it is our neighbors and loved ones who are dying.

Narcan, safer injection kits, fentanyl tests, and more are available from baltimoreharmreduction.org.

Working at Amazon is Bad for Your Health

In 2024, a Senate committee investigating Amazon found that their workers were twice as likely to get injured compared to the industry average. The cause of this was workers having to perform the same motions over and over again as well as the breakneck rates workers had to meet. On top of this, Amazon discourages injured workers from seeking outside medical care, making it more difficult for workers to get the necessary care they need after an injury.

Now, after Prime week, where we have to work not only an extra hour for each shift but also an extra day, we might be sore, exhausted, and injured because we are forced to work extra at these ridiculous rates. We shouldn't have to sacrifice our bodies in the name of profit for the boss Jeff Bezos and abusive managers. Our health and safety should come first, not the billionaires and their profits.

We live in the wealthiest country in the world, and it is our labor that has created all of this wealth. We aren't the ones who benefit from this. The super rich — the bosses of the big corporations and banks — keep the wealth and make all the decisions. Working people do the work that makes society run, and we can organize to unite our forces. When we do, we have enormous power to change things and make a better world.

How Hot is Too Hot? A Ridiculous Question!

Workers are forced to endure increasingly oppressive heat waves, and we must ask: “How hot is too hot?” Last year, a Baltimore sanitation worker died on the job from heat exposure. The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) continues to withhold information about the deaths of three New Jersey Amazon employees surrounding a “Prime Day” heat wave in 2022.

In recent months, OSHA has been holding public hearings to establish a federal heat standard for workplaces. A strange issue to ponder considering the simple answer: workers need safe, comfortable working conditions, including temperature regulation. *Anytime the bosses turn the AC on in their offices, the AC should already be on in warehouses, factories, and delivery vehicles!*

For-Profit Health Care is Bad for Patients and Staff

There is an obvious healthcare crisis in the U.S. Every year thousands of people struggle to pay for medical care, and many go through the horrifying experience that, despite paying for health insurance every month, they still have to pay large sums for crucial treatment out-of-pocket. This reality leads many to avoid going to the doctor or skip preventive care altogether because it's simply unaffordable.

Every day, hospital staff spend so many hours at work because of short staffing. We go above and beyond for the hospital and our patients. We are the very reason this place is able to function. And yet both patients and healthcare workers suffer under a system that prioritizes profits over proper healthcare and safe working conditions. No wonder so many people across the country are fed up with this healthcare system.

